NEXT WEEK: ADELPHI, "SUZI"; LYRIC, TRENTINI; LITTLE, "THE CRITIC"; FOREST, "BEN-HUR"

RICHARD BUHLER IN "BEN-HUR," FORREST

JOHN SLAVIN, CONNIE EDISS, TOM McNAUGHTON AND FRITZI VON BUSING IN "SUZI," ADELPHI

EMMA TRENTINI AND CLIFTON CRAWFORD IN "THE PEASANT GIRL," LYRIC

BESS SANKEY IN "THE TRAFFIC," WALNUT

BESSIE CLAYTON, KEITH'S

OF the many theories of dramatic criticism none is so foreign to America as the French method for which Prof. Brander Matthews has lately made an urgent plea. Very thorough critical opinion may be a difficult thing to render the day after the performance, but the public isn't made at all happier by reducing "first-night" reviews to mere catalogues of plots, players and applause. The managers like it. They tried to establish it in New York, but with little success. The newspapers realized that their readers were used to something more and wanted it.

The other half of Professor Matthews' proposition has more to be said for it—the critical consideration of a play at the end of the week, when ideas have had more time to digest. The practical difficulty there is that the reader once more rebels. He likes such "second thoughts on first nights." But he wants first of all a criticism on Tuesday. The Saturday dramatic column can only be a sort of depository for dramatic afterthoughts.

There does seem, however, to be room for improvement in one direction. The policy so often pursued in cities outside New York of reviewing all of Monday's openings on Tuesday, with various members of the paper's staff called in to help out the regular reviewer, gives no continuity to the criticisms. The reader can't learn the liking and antipathies, the personal bias of a particular man, and, following his opinions of various plays, learn to make allowances for the different ways in which different sorts of pieces will strike him and the difference in point of view between the critic and the reader.

To avoid this difficulty the reviewer of the EVENING LEDGER purposes hereafter to "cover" personally every new piece coming to the major theatres of Philadelphia. Thus, if there are more than two openings on a Monday the piece of first importance will be reviewed in Tuesday's paper, the second in Wednesday's, and so on. Where a play can be seen in one of the neighboring cities before coming here it may even be reviewed in Monday evening's paper prior to its production at a Philadelphia theatre.

Sardou's Double Curse

The Sardou of "Diplomacy," at the Broad, is under what Uncle Ephraim called "a double-twisted curse." Entertaining as he may often be in the hands of so good a cast, he is not what he once was. "Modernization" has diluted the drama with watery passages of humor that compare pretty badly with the tense moments in holding the interest of the audience. A piece that was decidedly in one "style"—compelling, if rather tricky theatrical excitement—has been turned into a mongrel which is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red blood.

Reduced thus in intensity, Sardou has little chance against our own melodramatists. Indeed, in all his pristine glory, it is doubtful if his much-lauded "technique" is to be compared with that quality of our playwrights which we denominate "punch." Everything the Scribe and Sardou learned in the art of making drama steadily more exciting as incident piles on incident, the modern writer has been able to assimilate and digest with little labor. The result is as great a theatrical skill with room for a good deal more attention to the human nature and human interests that, after all, make plays carry farthest. Bayard Veiller, of "Within the Law"; George Broadhurst, of "Bought and Paid For;" the authors of "Under Cover;" George Cohan, with "Seven Keys to Baldpate," can all outdo old "Diplomacy." And by the very fact that "Diplomacy" was written 30 years and more ago for them to learn from.

The Charm of Gillette

Just what is it—this thing that makes such men as William Gillette and H. B. Warner so charming to the ladies, or at least, to the young ladies? They aren't strapping. They don't languish. They haven't an Olympian calm or an Apollo-like beauty. And yet they attract. They have an undeniable "following" among the fair sex, who make the theatre what it is.

Is it perhaps an air of indifference which they cultivate? A deliberate refusal to put themselves out? They go ahead at their work with obliviousness to the rules, a certain modest, but determined satisfaction with being just themselves that is undeniably refreshing. Perhaps the ladies like them because they seem so efficient, because they suggest that they can challenge and conquer the handsomest of heroes that comes in their way.

What the Theatre Needs

Mayor Mitchel made the rather amazing statement to an association of managers and actors the other day that he was glad to see "so cohesive a body of business men." A good many other people have abused the American theatre for being too much of a business. As a matter of fact, the "commercial" manager has never been enough of a business man. The theatre, as it is organized here, is not a business, but a gamble. And the managers are not scientific manufacturers and salesmen, but something a little nearer fly-by-night exploiters of some novelty at a fair.

The American theatre is one big risk. Navigating the North Sea with a cargo of Denmark eggs is a gilt-edged proposition compared with producing plays over here. The touring system and the long-run idea make either a huge loss or a huge profit an absolute certainty. The cost of putting on plays is tremendously exaggerated over the stock company system of Germany. The chances of finding patrons for them, on the other hand, are reduced, while the number of audiences necessary to success is materially increased.

The American manager is not attempting to remedy this. He did not study that theatre system of Germany when he had the chance. He is not even making the best of a bad bargain by introducing real business efficiency into his work. Almost any expense is readily met, returns on successes are so large. And some men even imagine that by spending $50,000 on a single production they somehow insure its success.

Courageous Tyler

There was one manager who played the great gamble finely. He didn't try to be the business man, and he is now bankrupt. But the quality of the gambler that he showed was something that the businesslike manager needs for his art's sake and something the average plunger lacks—courage to venture into new fields. To Mr. Tyler and his firm, the Liebler Company, America owes more novel productions, more departures from the accepted and, consequently, more real stimulation, than to any other manager.

He had his big commonplace successes, his "Christian," "Alias Jimmy Valentine," his "Grumpy"; but even in them there was always something a little fresh either in play or production. And from Mr. Tyler came "Pomander Walk," "Disraeli," "The Garden of Allah," "The New Sin," the tours of Mme. Simone, of Cyril Maude, of the Irish Players, "A Man's Friends," "General John Regan," and the disastrous productions this year of "Twelfth Night" and "The Garden of Paradise," with Joseph Urban's remarkable scenery. It was characteristic, this last venture into the "new stagecraft" which brought him low.

But Mr. Tyler still has his ambition and his talents, if not his fortune. He cannot be allowed to remain idle. What a pity he cannot take his proper place as the director of some courageous venture like the New Theatre, but on sound business lines!

Shakespeare—"Made in Germany"

Without doubt it was Germany that made Shakespeare her own. She gave him productions at the hands of her many masters of the theatre and appreciation from repeated audiences that he never got in England or America. Consequently it was no wonder that, after dropping the English pieces for a time from his repertory in Berlin, Reinhardt was forced to restore them by the emphatic answers he received to the query which he sent broadcast, asking should he restore Shakespeare to the stage "as belonging to the great intellectual field we Germans have conquered and do not wish to lose?"

The German Chancellor, von Bithmann-Hollwig, answered for many more:

"He is a lunatic who squanders his property when hostile forces all around him are fighting against him. That is what Germany would be doing did she give up Shakespeare, who even today is her dramatist. What has England done for Shakespeare? Since Charles Kean led the theatrical world in London, she has dressed his works in glittering costumes, but has not been able to penetrate again with her emotions into the essence of his soul, for Shakespeare's happy England is no more. We play Shakespeare, Max Reinhardt, and as we recently had 'Henry IV,' let us also have 'Henry V' on the stage, with the battle of Agincourt and the capture of Harfleur! The warmest desire of German manhood rings in the dear hero's cry, 'On to Calais,' and from there quickly across to England.'"

When "Twelfth Night" was recently revived at one of the municipal theatres in Leipzig, the clown put all this into verse by means of a prologue, which the New York Tribune has thus translated:

My master, the great poet, who behind
This curtain built his world, and therewith, too,
Innumerous other worlds as marvelous—
Ye know him well, for near as man can climb
To godhead, he won godhead by his works—
Now this same poet hath commanded me
In solemn earnest to declare you this:
Ye unto him have been until today
His second home; his first and native home
Was England; but this England of the present
Is so contrarious in her acts and feelings,
Yea, so abhorred of his pure majesty
And the proud spirit of his free-born being,
That he doth find himself quite homeless there.
A fugitive, he seeks his second home,
This Germany, that loves him most of all
To whom before all others he gives thanks,
And says: Thou wonderful and noble land,
Remain thou Shakespeare's one and only home,
So that he wander not, uncomprehended,
Without a shelter in the barren world.

Brieux Explains Himself

"I am deeply convinced that the theatre can be a successful means of teaching. It should not limit its ambition to provide amusement. I do not mean to say that it should not entertain the people and make them forget the worries of life, and so increase, as it were, the poverty of their emotions. But just as we accept gay or grave novels and instructive books we should concede to the theatre the right, once in a while at least, of attempting the solution of the most serious and important problems.

"Personally, I have always considered the theatre not as an aim but as a means. I have desired through it not merely to arouse thinking, modify habits and actions, but again (and it is the censure which has caused me the least regret) to bring about social reforms which seemed desirable to me. I have always hoped that, because I have lived, the quantity of unhappiness in the world has been diminished to some extent.

"I feel that, happily, I have succeeded, for I know that two of my plays, 'Les Remplacantes' and 'Les Avaries,' have been the means of saving many human lives and of making others less wretched. Worthier efforts than mine may have been sterile; chance favored me.

"I deserve no commendation. I simply followed the impulse of my instincts. I would have been unable to do otherwise. I was born with the soul of an apostle, and I say it in no spirit of boastfulness. I did not create my own soul, but the sight of suffering in others has always been unbearable to me. As much as I have been able, I have tried to assuage the distress and weariness it causes me.

"As a child, I dreamed of saving the Apaches of Gustave Aimard and of Fenimore Cooper, or saving the little Chinese, whose martyrdom 'Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi' related. I wanted to go as missionary to the cannibals. But, as the Marquis de Segur said, in his address of welcome to the French Academy: 'It was only a passing fancy; you soon realized there were no more savages in Africa or in Oceania, but that there were a great many in France, and you turned your efforts to these.'

"It happened that my natural disposition allowed me to use that ringing megaphone, called the theatre. And, as it has been rightly said, I have very often, simply broken into open doors. A great many thought these open doors were closed, and to them I simply proved that they were not by going through them. Through this megaphone, I have said nothing that is new. I admit it. I have repeated in a language, which the mass of my fellow men could understand more easily, truths which philosophers and savants had discovered and hidden in books, which the habitues of the theatre were not tempted to read. That is why I am a playwright."—From Brieux's Speech to the American Academy.

THE NEW WEEK

ADELPHI—"Suzi," with Jose Collins, John Slavin, Tom McNaughton, Connie Ediss and Fritzi von Busing. An operetta of Viennese origin, with music by Aladar Renyi. The story concerns the courting of Suzi, prima donna, by the son of a colonel of huzzars, and supplies many openings for comedy. The piece has already been seen in New York at the Casino and Shubert Theatres, with the present very excellent cast, under Lew Fields' direction.

LYRIC (beginning Thursday)—"The Peasant Girl," with Emma Trentini, Clifton Crawford and a good supporting cast. An American operetta making its first metropolitan call. The "book," by Harold Atteridge, author of a number of Winter Garden shows, runs a somewhat usual course over the hardships of true love, with the very expert singer and comedian, Miss Trentini, and the no less amusing Mr. Crawford as the victims. The music is by Rudolph Friml, the musicianly composer of "The Firefly" and "High Jinks."

LITTLE THEATRE—"The Critic," with a cast drawn from Mrs. Jay's expert little company. The first local revival in some years of Sheridan's amusing satire on things theatrical in his day—and ours, to a certain extent. The piece burlesques the rehearsal of a poetic tragedy, with critic and author both in attendance.

FORREST—"Ben Hur," with Richard Buhler and a cast of less-known players. General Lew Wallace's familiar and popular play of the young Jew of the East who falls under the displeasure of Rome, suffers many hardships in slavery and ultimately triumphs in the famous chariot race scene.

LITTLE THEATRE (Wednesday afternoon and evening)—The French Players of New York, headed by Mme. Yorska, in their second visit. The matinee will show "L'Abbe Constantin," Halevy's play from the familiar and charming novel; the evening, "Blanchette," Brieux's powerful drama of the evils of ill-digested education.

CONTINUING.

BROAD—"Diplomacy," with William Gillette, Blanche Bates, Marie Doro and a strong cast. Sardou's famous old play of diplomatic spies, "modernized" by Mr. Gillette, and a good deal lengthened and diluted. Good acting compensates.

GARRICK — "Potash and Perlmutter." Montague Glass' popular stories of the clothing trade made over into the season's most heartily amusing comedy.

WALNUT — "The Traffic," by Rachel Marshall. Another "white slave" play of the familiar pattern.

VAUDEVILLE.

KEITH'S—Bessie Clayton, the expert dancer in "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," and modern and toe dances; Sam Chip and Mary Marble in "The Land of Dykes"; Jarrow, "The Humorous Trickster," in magic; Johnny Doley and Yvette Rugel, of Philadelphia, in comedy and song; the Alpine Troupe, wire artists; "Juliet?" in character; Brunelle and Stevens in musical comedy; "Blackface" Eddie Ross; Max J. York and his Canine Pupils, and the Hearst-Selig Weekly.

GRAND OPERA HOUSE—Robbin's Elephants; Alexander's Kids; James Thompson & Co. in "The Burglars' Union"; Morrissey and Hackett; Charles Thompson, "The Philadelphia Boy"; Mildred and Ruth, and motion pictures.

GLOBE—"The Mystic Bird," a trained canary; John and May Burke, in "The Ragtime Soldier"; Ed Howard, comedian; Hanlon and Clifton, athletes; Santos and Hayes; Hazel Noran; the Fred St. Onge company, cyclists.

WILLIAM PENN—Morton and Austin, in "Success"; Lady Sen Mei, "Chinese Nightingale"; George Nagel and company; Wilson and Le Nore; "The Three Johns," and De War's Comedy Circus.

STOCK.

AMERICAN — "A Wife's Secret." A drama dealing with the serious results of lack of confidence between husband and wife. A plotting villain sows suspicion in the man, which it takes four acts to clear away.

BURLESQUE.

EMPIRE—B. F. Forrester's American Beauties, including Lew Hilton, Billy Evans, Percie Judah and Maudie Heath, and a good-sized chorus in musical comedy and vaudeville.

COMING.

DECEMBER 28.
BROAD—"Jerry," with Billie Burke. An amusing comedy of the tempestuous wooing of a diffident young man by the ever-Burkian young actress. Seen last season in New York.

WALNUT — "The Heart of Paddy Whack," with Chauncey Olcott. An Irish piece of more serious trend than usual, but with an opportunity for song.

JANUARY 4.
LITTLE THEATRE — "Courage." An anti-war play by A. M. Richardson, an English playwright, produced here for the first time on any stage. It deals with the present conflict.

JANUARY 11.
GARRICK—"The Miracle Man," with George Nash, Gail Kane and W. H. Thompson. George M. Cohan's entirely serious dramatization of Mr. Packard's novel of a faith healer who converted a band of crooks bent on exploiting the public through him. Fresh from a New York run.

BROAD—"The Girl of Girls," a musical comedy by Edward Paulton and Oreste Vessela, with Novellis conducting.

JANUARY 18.
BROAD—"The Legend of Leonora" and "The Ladies' Shakespeare," with Maude Adams. Two typical Barrie plays. The first and more substantial deals with the amazing mock trial of a lady who was supposed to have thrown a passenger out of moving train because he threatened her child's health with open windows. The second is a little burlesque of "The Taming of the Shrew."

Miss Bessie Clayton